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LEGAL ATTEMPT TO ENFORCE THE PRACTICE OF INFANT BAPTISM:

BEING
A genuine Copy of a PETITION to PARLIAMENT, by the
NURSES and CHAMBERMAIDS of the Cities of LON-
DON, WESTMINSTER, and the Borough of SOUTH-
WARK, against the ANABAPTISTS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED
A COUNTER PETITION
BY THE
WIVES OF THE ANABAPTISTS;
AND
A LETTER
To THE REV. JOHN HORSEY,
By AMY CAUDLE.

“If murder be a sin, then dipping ordinarily in cold water over-head, in England, is a sin: and those that would make it mens religion to murder themselves, and urge it on their consciences as their duty, are not to be suffered in a commonwealth, any more than highway murderers.” BAXTER.

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P R E F A C E

BY THE

E D I T O R.

TO gratify the Friends of Religious Liberty, the following Pieces are, by permission, printed in this form. Imperfect copies have, indeed, been presented to the Public, through the channel of a newspaper—and this consideration, among others, renders an accurate statement of the Controversy needful. To perform this task, no person is, perhaps, better qualified than myself; and I think my vanity cannot be impeached, nor my impartiality suspected, if the reader be informed that it is executed by one differently minded

IV

P R E F A C E.

from either of the communities who are interested in the issue—and that my abilities for the work are derived from the Secretaries whom they have thought proper to appoint.

With **AMY CAUDLE** and **ISABEL DIPPER**, I have lived in friendship for many years,—and the Public may rest assured, that there is not a single word added to either the Petitions or the Letter, but what they have themselves respectively supplied.

E M M A D R Y.

*White-Hart Court, Gracechurch-street,
5th February, 1786.*

A L E G A L.

A

LEGAL ATTEMPT

TO ENFORCE THE PRACTICE OF

INFANT BAPTISM.

London, 4th December, 1785.

YESTERDAY there was a very numerous and respectable meeting of the NURSES and CHAMBERMAIDS of the cities of London, Westminster, and the Borough of Southwark, to take into consideration the propriety of an application to Parliament, respecting the alarming situation into which they are brought by the sentiments and practice of a certain description

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of separatists from the established church, called BAPTISTS ; who, by sundry publications, have brought INFANT BAPTISM into such disrepute, that the perquisites connected with their employment, are almost entirely destroyed, and the situation of those attendants of the chamber, rendered truly deplorable and affecting. After a number of sensible and pertinent remarks on the subject, it was unanimously agreed to choose a committee of six, to prepare a Petition to be presented at the next meeting of Parliament. In about an hour the committee returned, and read the following Petition, which received uncommon testimonies of applause, and was ordered to be signed by the Secretary, in behalf of the whole meeting :—

‘ WE, the NURSES and CHAMBERMAIDS of the cities of London, Westminster, and the Borough of Southwark, beg leave to state to this Honourable House, the great hardships under which we labour, and the irreparable injuries we have sustained by the great neglect of INFANT BAPTISM. This sacred ceremony was, we humbly conceive, wisely ordered by the church for the most salutary purposes to the CHILD, and for the benefit of others more immediately concerned. It would be altogether superfluous

to inform this Honourable House, that much of our support is derived from the observance of this ancient rite. Every Member is, no doubt, apprized, that the gratuitous donations of **SPONSORS, or PROXIES**, who become ostensible representatives for the infant to be christened, form by far the greatest part of those pecuniary advantages which were originally intended to solace the weariness of sleepless nights, and to recompence the exertions of that maternal care and tenderness, inseparably connected with our respective professions.

• ‘ We are happy, however, that truth compels us to remark, that the **BAPTISTS**, against whom we have now the honour to petition, are the only persons who have caused this institution to be neglected and despised. They seem unwearied in their endeavours, and are, indeed, but too successful in their attempts to abolish a rite which has been so long honourably retained, and beneficially administered. For the retention of this ordinance, we have urged, in vain, the ruin of ourselves and families; in vain have we pleaded the salutary effects transmitted to posterity; for, alas! appeals to humanity were treated with frigid indifference, and our tender concern for

the welfare of our charge, as the reveries of superstition and bigotry.

‘ To carry back the thoughts of this Honourable House to the remote period when these people were first known in the world, or minutely to trace their success in different ages of the church, would be as irksome to you, as unpleasing to ourselves. We have, indeed, nothing to do with ages or centuries elapsed ; we feel the effects of their zeal in the present, and under this impression, we now petition for redress.

‘ Were we to state to this Honourable Assembly, the means adopted by the BAPTISTS for the propagation of their CRUEL SENTIMENTS, we might mention their sermons, when preaching on the subject of baptism, and the many elaborate performances that issue from the press : of the latter, indeed, we now mean to refer to an instance which has perhaps no parallel in history, ancient or modern. It may be needful however to premise, that in years past, when knowledge was incomplete, and the views of men limited, and partial : some writers of our own church, as well as others, expressed themselves with a degree of latitude and candour, suited to the times in which they wrote : they made confessions

cessions where truth compelled them to concede : others with more zeal, but less knowledge, granted more than the interests of our cause could admit ; so that by the candour of one, and the ignorance of another, the enemy has been armed with weapons to destroy the object which they themselves intended to protect. Of this, the writer alluded to above, was perfectly informed ; for he has not been content with using arguments professedly his own, but has taken the advantage of candour and of weakness, and exhibited to the world a *spectacle*, under the character of ‘ *Pædobaptism examined on the principles, concessions, and reasonings of the most learned Pædobaptists*,’ that, it is to be feared, will frighten the remainder of our friends from both the *BASON* and the *FONT*. When this *heterodox Affailant* first made his appearance, our fears were exceedingly alarmed ; and we still are suspicious, that unless something speedily be done, the foundation of our church will totter to its base, and the superstructure itself tumble into ruins. Permit us further to remark, that in this vigorous attack, the imbecilities of our staunchest friends are exposed with rigorous exactness, and the arguments against us so artfully arranged, that we apprehend if the remnant of our freinds should reason on the subject,

their minds may be alienated from a rite, which they have long thought it their duty and privilege to observe.

‘ It may perhaps be proper to relate, that we have long found our pittance of support gradually decline ; but we were unwilling to complain—we were patient in bearing injuries which we could not escape—we thought that time might discover the deception, that prejudice would be speedily removed, and that the conduct of past generations would be followed by the present. But of this we have now no hopes, unless the wisdom of this House graciously interpose, and by a vigorous resolve, put a stop to the publications of those enemies to the ancient usage of the church.

‘ We have now only to subjoin as an apology for approaching this August Tribunal, that we had no other channel in which to expect or hope for redress. Other means have been adopted, but adopted hitherto in vain—To the clergy, with whom we were formerly conversant, we have frequently appealed ; but they have left us to sorrow and despair.—They told us there was no hope of convincing a *sectary* of an error, who opposed the DECISIONS OF THE CHURCH—

that

(11)

that they felt the effects as sensibly as we—But that as the continuance of INFANT BAPTISM depended not on ARGUMENT but on LAW, we must have recourse to our LEGISLATORS for redress.'

(Signed)

AMY CAUDLE, SEC.

T H E

T H E

C O U N T E R P E T I T I O N.

London, December 28, 1785.

LAST week, at a general meeting of all the WIVES of the BAPTISTS in the cities of London, Westminster, and the Borough of Southwark; it was unanimously agreed that the petition intended to be presented to Parliament by the NURSES and CHAMBERMAIDS, is an attempt to deprive them of their religious liberty, and that such a procedure loudly calls for a counter petition. After some consultation on the subject, a petition that had been previously prepared was read, carried without a dissenting voice, and ordered to be signed by the Secretary in behalf of the whole body.

‘ WE, the WIVES of the BAPTISTS residing in the cities of London, Westminster, and the Borough of Southwark, beg leave to approach this Honourable House, impressed with a due sense of the mild government under which we live, and the civil and religious liberty we enjoy; and we are sorry that an attempt to deprive us of this natural right, compels us to trespass on the

the patience of this assembly, while we briefly state the reasons of our conduct respecting the matter in dispute, and the ground on which our dissent from the national establishment is founded.

‘ In matters of religion, we call no man Lord, for one is our master, even CHRIST: we acknowledge him as King in Zion, and the only LAW GIVER in his church. We consider him as possessed of infinite wisdom, and therefore competent to judge what ordinances are best calculated to answer the end for which they were instituted; and we believe he has ordained such, and such only, as are adapted for that purpose. We also think it incompatible with our duty, as subjects of his kingdom, to inquire why a positive rite is thus to be performed, and not otherwise. We do not pretend to dispute the propriety of his injunctions, much less tacitly to arraign his wisdom, by arrogating to ourselves a discretionary power of altering or mutilating any of his appointments; nor yet of substituting our own inventions, and of then reasoning analogically in order to shew they may answer the end he had in view, equally as well: We imagine this would be setting up our fallible judgments against infinite wisdom; and, virtually,

virtually, a renunciation of his authority and government.

‘ On this ground we argue, that if our divine Lord intended infants should be baptized, he would either have said so, or have left some example after which his followers might copy—— that in a matter of such vast importance to his church, he would not have left us to the uncertainty of conjecture, or the dictates of caprice; but this he has done, if they are included in the divine appointment of baptism. It should be remembered, however, that a supposition of this nature impeaches both his wisdom and his goodness; his wisdom, in adopting such vague terms, though enacting a law intended to bind all his followers, as do not, nor can express his meaning; his goodness, because his sincere disciples might, on this ground, incur displeasure by acting contrary to his divine will, without even the least intention of rebellion, or neglect of his authority.

‘ But we humbly presume this is not the case. We are thoroughly convinced that the ordinance of baptism is clearly revealed, and the subjects to whom it ought to be administered, sufficiently described. Our great Lawgiver has expressed his

his mind with clearness and precision ; in terms that cannot be misunderstood*, if the mind be free from prejudice and open to instruction ; and we think we shall not do justice to the divine statute, unless we introduce it to the notice of this honourable assembly—thus it runs—

‘ **GO AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHHR,**

* *In terms that cannot be misunderstood, &c.]* We know that assertions of this nature would not subserve the interests of Pædobaptism—and we must do our opponents justice by observing, that they never appeal to scripture authority, in a direct way, to countenance their practice. They defend the favourite hypothesis by inferences and analogy—by appeals to passages, that in the hands of a Roman Catholic, would be as applicable to **EXTREME UNCTION** as to infant baptism—who, for instance, but a person deeply skilled in the sacred mysteries of religion, could discover infant baptism in Gen. xvii. 7. Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. and Cant. vii. 2.—Of the ingenuity of one friend, we will give the reader a specimen—“ Thy *navel*, says the inspired writer, in the text last quoted, is like a round goblet which wanteth not liquor.” Here, says the learned Dr. EDWARDS, is a great controversy solved, namely, between us and the Anabaptists, who are against the baptizing of children, because they are not come to years of understanding. Let it be remembered from what is suggested to us here, that infants (according to the notion which prevailed in those days) receive nourishment by the *navel*, though they take not in any food by the mouth—So it is no good objection against baptizing infants, that they are ignorant and understand not what they do, and that they are not able to take in spiritual nourishment after the ordinary way : it may be done, as it is said here, by the *navel*, by that federal knot, or link, which ties them fast to their christian and believing parents.

AND

AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST.' Now we conceive that our rightful Sovereign meant to be understood when this authoritative commission issued from his lips ; that when he said, go, and **TEACH** all nations, he intended such to be taught as were capable of instruction ; but if infants are included in the command, his language is, go and teach those whom it is **IMPOSSIBLE** to teach : to suppose this, however, would be absurd and impious ; and yet if infants are to be baptized, the inference is fair, and the censure unavoidable and just.

‘ We beg leave further to suggest, that we think the divine law enacts that teaching is to **PRECED**E baptism, and that none are to be baptized who are not previously instructed ; and it is clear to us, that unless this be the meaning, the words have no meaning at all ; and we do not scruple to affirm, that those who baptize infants, invert the order of the original commission, act contrary to the injunctions of the divine statute, and practically say, we will not first teach and then baptize, but we will baptize and not teach at all—for thus it happens to infants whom they officiously baptize.

Besides,

Besides, we consider baptism as an act of religious worship; and if the words contained in the institution be properly viewed, perhaps the most solemn of any recorded in the New Testament—baptizing them, says the divine Law-giver, **IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST**; which must certainly be considered as an address to the party to be baptized, for to whom else will it properly apply?—It cannot apply to the surrounding spectators, because they are not the parties to whom the ordinance is to be administered; and the words of the administrator confirm our suspicions, for he says, “I baptize **THEE**”—but what does it signify to speak thus to a struggling infant, who neither **HEARS** nor **UNDERSTANDS**; and who indeed is sometimes held with difficulty, and seldom without obstreperous appeals to humanity for deliverance, even when the watry element is **SPARINGLY** used, and **CAUTIOUSLY** applied. Of the absurdity of this practice, those who first introduced infant baptism, seemed perfectly aware: they found themselves involved in a dilemma from which they had never been extricated, had not the genius of that mystery of iniquity which changed both the subject and the mode of baptism, proposed the introduction of godfathers

and godmothers, who were to be addressed instead of the children, and bound to the discharge of duties which they themselves were unable to perform. This was certainly an expedient of inestimable value to the PRIEST : and as liberal secular advantages were connected with his administering baptism to infants, care was, no doubt, taken to inculcate its value and importance—to convince the unsuspecting parent that the right of children to the sacred ceremony was indisputable—that to withhold them from it was a breach of duty unpardonable—that their cruelty would be eminently conspicuous, because their offspring were deprived of an ordinance, by which they might be effectually regenerated, and completely saved from perdition.

That infant baptism was first adopted under an idea of its being absolutely necessary to salvation, cannot, we presume, justly be denied. This absurd and dangerous notion was first grounded on a misinterpretation of these words of our divine Master, “ *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;* ” and in this view, it is no wonder that the ordinance was considered of infinite moment; nor need we be at all surprized, that

that the sick immediately became objects of priestly compassion; and that those who had lived to old age without the grace of baptism, received the salutary element in the agonies of death. But, alas! in this case also an obstacle occurred that could not be easily removed: the circumstances of the patient, as to health, were such as forbade the use of water, as applied by the apostles and succeeding ministers in the church: it was, however, at length decreed, that if the element could be but safely applied, the business would be done; and SPRINKLING being considered as the least dangerous to the CLINIC, this mode was readily adopted, and has been ever since retained as a SUCCEDEANEUM for baptism. From this accommodating practice, SPRINKLING first took its rise; and we positively affirm, that previous to the view of baptism as essential to salvation, there is no evidence that infants ever were baptized. If, however, infant baptism had been always administered by the apostles, and afterwards by their successors in the church, as some of our opponents venturously affirm; it is more than probable that those very CLINICS must have undergone the ceremony themselves, and could therefore stand in no need of having it repeated on the borders of the grave.

We again beg leave to remark to this Honourable House, that the words of our great Legislator, *Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, is the divine statute for the administration of baptism; and we doubt not but every member clearly perceives, that so far from its containing a command for the baptism of infants, the very words themselves form as strong a prohibition as could easily be framed: for to say, “**go TEACH**,” and then “**BAPTIZE**,” is in plain terms a **FORBIDDING** baptism previous to instruction; and we are clearly of opinion, that if this House were to enact, that every man should take a soleinn oath **BEFORE HE VOTED** for a candidate to represent this country in Parliament, it would be judged needless, and indeed absurd, to add, **he shall not VOTE and then SWEAR**, because this is unquestionably implied in the words of the statute; and if the officer appointed to administer the oath, should, notwithstanding the plainnes of the precept, controvert the propriety of its order, and assume to himself the power of letting the citizen first **VOTE and then SWEAR**; we will venture to assert, that this House would consider its wisdom impeached, and its dignity insulted, by a man whose duty was subjection and obedience. It must, however,

ever, be acknowledged, on comparison, that some disparity will appear in applying this conduct of the officer to the subject in question; because he complies with the whole of his duty, only in a way different from appointment; but he who administers baptism to infants, baptizes indeed, but teaching, which is certainly a very essential part of his duty, he neglects to perform.

We have already observed, that the words first quoted are the DIVINE LAW of baptism; but we do not mean to assert that there is no instance in scripture of baptism being administered, because there are many; but it happens, unfortunately for our opponents, that in every passage where the subject occurs, there is no intimation of infants being concerned, though the apostles have been so explicit as to mention both MEN and WOMEN; nor is there a SINGLE PASSAGE, or a SINGLE INSTANCE, from which the custom can be rationally inferred. And we have too high an opinion of the wisdom and goodness of HIM we worship, to suppose, that if it had been his will that infants should be baptized, he would not have left for our direction either precept or example. We cannot believe that we are to spell out the secret counsels of his will by INFERENCE and ANALOGY; this is the work of

SCHOOLMEN and of PRIESTS, who are more interested than we are, in having the minds of the ignorant and unwary impressed with an idea of PROFOUND MYSTERIES, only fathomable by *adepts* in Hebrew and Greek—that are only to be explored by minute researches into the dark records of antiquity, or by laboured investigations of the unmeaning jargon of COUNCILS and SYNODS—we consider such men to be wise above what is written, and our divine Master as perfectly acquainted with the ignorance of which we are naturally the subjects, of the prejudices against which all his followers must combat, and as therefore graciously “ LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE, THAT WE SHOULD FOLLOW HIS STEPS.”

Besides, we humbly presume that the practice of infant baptism is not only *contrary* to the command of our divine Teacher, but *repugnant* to the nature and design of his kingdom in the world. He hath himself said, “ MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD;” not founded on WORLDLY MAXIMS, and NATIONAL PREJUDICES; but is purely spiritual, and composed of members separated from the world by the agency of the Divine Spirit, for spiritual purposes. The time is now come, in which they that worship, must

must worship in spirit and in truth, for *such the Father seeketh to worship him*; but of this worship, or indeed of any other, infants are incapable, and therefore cannot be considered as objects of his visible dominion, nor fit subjects of any ordinance, in which spiritual service and internal worship are required.

Having, at some length, stated to this House the ground on which we differ from the sentiments of your petitioners, whose complaints* have brought us to the bar; we rest perfectly satisfied, being confident that the wisdom of this assembly will neither repress our love of truth, nor damp the zeal that would have it universally embraced; much less attempt, by compulsory edicts, to make us believe WITHOUT EVIDENCE, and practise without SCRIPTURE PRECEPT or EXAMPLE,—this is all we solicit, and this our consciences urge us to demand.

* These complaints were, it seems, excited by a publication entitled, “*Pædobaptism examined, on the Principles, Concessions, and Reasonings of the most learned Pædobaptists. By the REV. ABRAHAM BOOTH.*”—A work, in our judgment, unanswerable.—We consider infant baptism as having received a *wound* for which there is no specific.—We, therefore, sympathize with its disconsolate friends, and assure them, that in order to facilitate its exit, our joint interests shall be speedily exerted to procure, if possible, a repetition of the stroke—for it must be painful to see an object so much beloved, and so long enjoyed, lingering in the agonies of death.

We

We also think it just further to remark, that we have no enmity or dislike to those of our nocturnal attendants, who have, in this instance, exposed our conduct to the world. We leave them to follow the dictates of conscience; and this liberty we request for ourselves. We cheerfully acknowledge their fidelity and care: we have been witness of their affection and fondness for the offspring committed to their charge; and we are willing, and ever have been willing, to recompense their diligence by suitable returns: and if our endeavours have not reached the summit of their expectations, it must be owing to the treachery of our memories, which, from a long disuse of SPONSORS or PROXIES in baptism, have forgotten the fees that custom has established.

(Signed)

ISABEL DIPPER, SEC.

A LETTER

A L E T T E R

To the Rev. JOHN HORSEY of Northampton.

S I R,

I AM commanded by the Society of which I am a member, to make a tender of our thanks for the very seasonable attempt you have made to support the cause in which we are mutually embarked. We take it for granted, that our intended application to Parliament is a matter of which you were informed; we therefore view your present publication, though unsolicited, as an effort to serve us at this critical juncture! and this consideration alone, has laid us under obligations that we feel ourselves unable to discharge.

But, Sir, whatever impressions your goodness may have made, we shall not be lavish of encomium; we had rather repress the risings of gratitude, than suffer it to overflow in strains of panegyric that malignant envy might construe into flattery. We have much to praise, and but little that the dictates of prudence solicit us to blame; but of this little we mean to take some cursory notice, that our impartiality may be

be evident to all—that the world may see a love of hypothesis has neither blinded our understandings, nor so perverted our judgments as to render truth and error equally important.

We perceive that Mrs. DIPPER's remarks on the commission of Christ respecting baptism, have not escaped your vigilant attention, we think, however, that your reply does not remove the difficulties with which our practice is, in her view, embarrassed. That the words "go TEACH all nations, baptizing them," naturally enforce teaching PREVIOUS to baptism, we have always secretly acknowledged; and we are fearful that your explanation of the passage will rather perplex than illustrate—will have a tendency to shew that we are still in the wrong; and give some subtle enemy an opportunity of remarking, that, in order to get rid of one difficulty, you have adopted another, and made use of arguments that confirm the assertions you were aiming to explode.

"Let us," say you, "review the commission, and observe, whether it does not agree with this account.—Go teach, that is, *proselyte* or *disciple*, all nations,—how? baptizing them; let that be the form of matriculation into my school."

Now,

Now, Sir, admitting, for a moment, this explanation to be just, what shall we gain by it?—Can a person be PROSELYTED without a revolution of sentiment?—The very word itself implies a change of opinion concerning something formerly embraced as true, but which, on comparison with another proposed for belief, is afterwards rejected as erroneous or hurtful. The word PROSELYTE, therefore, which you have unwarily adopted, militates against us; for infants are incapable of those mental operations which the word naturally suggests—nor, indeed, is the term DISCIPLE better adapted for the purpose—for how can a person be called a DISCIPLE, without being a follower of him to whom he looks for instruction?—These, you see, are questions not easily answered; and we sincerely wish you had not attempted to elucidate a passage which is too plain to need any comment, and against which indeed we never durst raise even a single objection. You then say,—“baptizing them in the name, that is, introducing them to the knowledge, and subjecting them to the authority and protection, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”—But it will be asked, how does BAPTIZING an infant introduce it to the knowledge of these divine objects of worship? Does it expand

expand the intellects—illuminate the understanding—inform the judgment—direct the will, and engage the affections to reverence and love God?—for this it must do, if infants are brought by baptism to know him, and to submit to his authority—This is certainly impossible—nor do we remember ever to have heard any thing like it asserted before. We believe, indeed, ourselves, that the child is regenerated by baptism; but then this is quite a different affair—for an infant may possess a principle of grace, and yet not act in a gracious manner—and the reason is obvious—it cannot—because this requires mental exertions of which infants are NATURALLY incapable.

You say, ‘ that Christ adopted baptism only to perpetuate a rite which was practised in the Jewish Church before the commencement of Christianity, in order to determine its use in the evangelical dispensation.’ Now OWEN, JENNINGS, BRADBURY, and others, give a very different account. They tell us, ‘ that the LORD JESUS CHRIST should transfer a Jewish rite, which in reality did NOT EXIST, for the use of his disciples, is destitute of all probability.—That it is more likely the Jews took the hint of proselyte baptism, after our Saviour’s time, than

than that he BORROWED his baptism from them, —and that to fetch it from the Jews is a WILD IMAGINATION, and no better than seeking the LIVING among the DEAD.'

Now, Sir, you step forward to contradict what these respectable characters have asserted, without bringing any evidence, but such as our ablest friends have dismissed as not pleadable in a cause where so much is depending; and indeed not pleadable in any cause, where reference must be had to either Judge or Jury for a verdict.

You inform us also, that baptism ' by no means ascertains to the subject SPIRITUAL and SAVING blessings; he is truly marked out only as a child of the kingdom, not in the highest sense, a child of God.' Why, my dear Sir, (pardon our freedom) if you talk at this rate, you will ruin us indeed! How much more consistent is the language of our friend Mr. HENRY —He was aware of the immense importance of infant baptism, for, says he, ' it is an ordinance whereby the person baptized is solemnly admitted a member of the visible church; and that it doth seal, confirm and make over to us, all the benefits of the death of Christ.' Now, Sir, this is

is speaking to purpose ; for in this light every person must at once perceive that the ordinance is of infinite value, and, therefore, neither to be neglected nor despised. But according to your representation, it is neither one thing nor another, and might as well be totally abolished. We apprehend, however, that we have not much to fear from what you have advanced ; because we have innumerable friends, equally respectable who have given evidence against you. We have perhaps much more to dread from the very glaring contradictory assertions of those writers who espouse the cause we are now aiming to defend ; for their accounts, both of the ordinance itself, and of the subjects to whom it should be administered, are so widely different, that the world have reason to suspect the premises to be doubtful or obscure, from which conclusions so opposite are drawn. That our enemies make a handle of our **INSTABILITY**, we have had recent proof that we never shall forget—we daily feel its force in argument against us, and indeed, what can they think, what ought they not to think, when they daily see we agree in nothing but to differ ?—For our parts, we are unanimous in declaring with the **CHURCH**, that by this ordinance, we are made **MEMBERS OF CHRIST**, **CHILDREN OF GOD**, and **INHERITORS** of the

KINGDOM

KINGDOM of HEAVEN ; and unless we all agree in asserting this, we shall not do any thing to purpose. The people will never think much of infant baptism, if this be not constantly affirmed ; and though we do not find the practice authorized or countenanced by **SCRIPTURE** precept or example, yet it is not on that account to be made light of or neglected ; for it must ever be maintained that the **CHURCH** has an undoubted power to decree **RITES** or **CEREMONIES** for its members to observe.

You next assert, that by the ordinance of baptism, ‘ we are not admitted into any *particular* church or religious society, but set apart as *visible* subjects of Christ’s kingdom at large.’ Now, Sir, this clause we cannot comprehend. We have always understood that in a religious view, there are but two classes of mankind ; namely, the **CHURCH** and the **WORLD** ; or in other words, two descriptions of characters, the **RELIGIOUS** and **IRRELIGIOUS**. But you say we are not to be considered as admitted into the **CHURCH**, nor any **RELIGIOUS** society of men ; pray then, Sir, into what are we admitted ; Surely you dont mean to clas our offspring among the **IR-RELIGIOUS**, and yet this is the conclusion your premises leave us to make. You say, indeed,

they are set apart as **VISIBLE** subjects of Christ's kingdom at large; which appears to us unaccountably strange! for we have been always told, that when any person became **VISIBLY** a subject of Christ's kingdom, he was considered as a fit member for the church, and as such was readily received; but according to this new doctrine, Christ may have subjects that are **VISIBLY** his, who may not be set apart either for the **CHURCH**, or any **RELIGIOUS** society whatever.

You are pleased further to remark, that 'Christian baptism incorporated the subjects of it among those denominated **CHRISTIANS** (of which class we perceive by your reasoning above, the church or religious is not composed) being the **BADGE** or token of the Christian religion, as circumcision incorporated the subjects on whom that was performed, among those denominated **Jews**, being the **BADGE** or token of the Jewish religion.' Respecting the propriety of this comparison, the most experienced of our members have been consulted, and they all uniformly declare that there is not the least resemblance: and were it possible you could become one of us, there is not the least doubt but you would soon be convinced of the propriety of their remarks; for there are many of our number who have been occasionally called to officiate in the families of

of JEWS; and they all positively affirm (for I cannot speak of my own knowledge) that there is an infinite disparity—nay, that there is no analogy at all—that they have seen both **CEREMONIES** repeatedly performed—that they could always distinguish with certainty the **ISRAELITISH SEED**, because the **BADGE** of which you speak is so deeply impressed, that neither labour nor art, nor even time itself can entirely efface it—that on the contrary, the **DESCENDANTS OF CHRISTIANS** have no such **BADGE**, by which to distinguish them from the children of **INFIDELS** or **HOTTENTOTS**—that were they compelled by oath to discriminate any one subject whom they had even fostered in their arms, and on whom they had seen the rite of baptism performed, they have no certain **MARK** or **TOKEN** by which to identify his person.

Now, Sir, this is not an assertion hastily made, or founded on conjecture: we have deliberately thought on the subject; we have **EXAMINED**, again and again, the objects of our charge to whom the solemn ceremony of baptism hath been seriously applied: but we did not stop here—we were diffident of ourselves—we knew that infirmities were the concomitants of old age, and that **DIMNESS** might betray us into

error; we therefore had recourse to DOLLOND to remedy the defect—no expense was spared in procuring glasses, both CONCAVE and CONVEX—every one was suited with SPECTACLES according to age or to sight; and indeed much time spent, but spent in vain, in order to discover, if possible, the MARKS or the BADGE of which you so confidently speak.

That we are not singular in sentiment respecting this matter, we can easily demonstrate: “Baptism,” says Dr. ERSKINE, “has none of those properties which rendered circumcision a fit sign and seal of an external covenant. “Circumcision impressed an ABIDING MARK; “was the characteristic of Judaism; belonged “to all Jews, however differing in opinion or “practice; and those born of a Jew, even when “come to age, were entitled to it. Whereas “baptism impresses no abiding MARK.” “Circumcision,” says the celebrated VENEMA, “was a permanent sign. It was a characteristical MARK of Judaism; nor was it capable of being erased by any opinions or conduct, provided the foundations of Judaism were not subverted by them. These things agree to circumcision, “considered simply as an external sign; all which are otherwise now, in regard to baptism. Baptism “is

“ is not a permanent MARK. It is not a distinguishing character of real Christians.”

Besides, we are unanimous in thinking that you exceedingly degrade the ordinance of Christian baptism, by representing it as a substitute for circumcision. We agree with Dr. WILLIT, “ that arguments drawn from types and figures conclude not, unless they be types ordained of God to such use; neither are the sacraments of the Gospel to be squared out according to the pattern of the ceremonies of the law.” “ It is asserted,” says LIMBORCH, “ that baptism came in the room of circumcision; and since the latter was administered to infants, the former ought to be administered to them likewise. Taking this for granted, yet it will by no means follow, that all the circumstances prescribed in circumcision should likewise be observed in baptism. For, *first*, infant baptism is nowhere so expressly commanded as circumcision is. *Secondly*, it would from thence follow, that infants should be baptized on the EIGHTH day precisely, or else they would be cut off from the people of God. *Thirdly*, nay, they should be baptized as soon as they are born.—*Fourthly*, if this consequence were of any force, I might with parity of reason infer, “ that

“ that since MALES only were circumcised,
 “ therefore now it is unlawful for the FEMALES
 “ to be baptized.”—And pray, Sir, what would
 become of us then? Surely we have suffered
 enough already by the loss of children who un-
 doubtedly ought to have been christened; but
 if one half of the remnant that remains be taken
 away also, we shall be inevitably ruined.—So
 that after all our patient endeavours to rear the
 weakness of infancy to strength—to perpetuate
 posterity for the happiness of others—our in-
 terests are to be abandoned, and the languor of
 old age left to conflict with the miseries of want.
 —And yet, affecting as such a consideration must
 appear, this will certainly be the case, if infant
 baptism be deduced from such premises. The
 reasoning of our friends from circumcision, as
 applicable to the ordinance in question, has af-
 forded our enemies much scope for ridicule and
 triumph. You must have seen authors in the
 course of your reading, who have followed ana-
 logical inferences closely indeed!—We remember
 to have once met with a shrewd disputant, who,
 when arguing the point, boldly asserted that
 none of our infants had been properly baptized—
 “ for,” said he, “ in order to render an observance
 “ of ritual service, or the performance of any
 “ act of religious worship acceptable, it must be
 “ done

"done in obedience to DIVINE PRECEPT OR
 "EXAMPLE—but for the baptizing of infants
 "you bring no EXAMPLE—you plead no COM-
 "MAND from either the OLD Testament or the
 "NEW.—Your practice is founded on analogical
 "inferences drawn from an antiquated rite
 "which was sacredly enjoined; but this cannot
 "be said of the ordinance for which you con-
 "tend.—And if you will infer, that because the
 "ABRAHAMIC seed were CIRCUMCISED, there-
 "fore your children should be CHRISTENED—
 "and usurp a discretionary power of abandoning
 "the KNIFE for the element of WATER; the
 "same indulgence cannot be granted for AP-
 "PLYING the SUBSTITUTE to a PART not
 "originally APPOINTED, without destroying
 "the force of all your reasonings from analogy
 "—Were this admitted, you might with as
 "much propriety sprinkle the FEET as the
 "FACE; for the one is as much commanded as
 "the other, or, indeed, any distinct part of the
 "body which the ingenuity of fancy might de-
 "scribe."

Now, Sir, to these remarks we were, for more
 reasons than one, unable to reply.—We felt our-
 selves ASHAMED and embarrassed.—We found
 that we had adopted premises from which no
 conclusions

conclusions for our practice could fairly be drawn;—we therefore unanimously determined to discard the argument as INDECENT and USELESS, and as calculated to destroy the institution we were labouring to defend.

But this discomfiture, however painful or unpleasing, had its use—it was productive of good that we never once expected.—We determined no longer to take matters upon trust, as we had formerly done—but resolved at once to examine the scriptures for ourselves—the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT were read with diligent attention—and much time spent in search of the evidence we were led to expect—but, alas! we found no traces of INFANT BAPTISM being any where commanded, nor any example after which we might copy. Our disappointment was immediately announced to a CLERICAL acquaintance, on whose secrecy and judgment we could safely rely; and his opinion consulted respecting the silence of scripture on a subject of such importance and use. He told us, that infant baptism was not, indeed, any where SYLLABICALLY expressed, nor was it needful that it should; because it might with equal safety be inferred from the customs and ceremonies which the ancient Jewish ritual enforced. This remark appeared to

us INGENIOUS and STRIKING—as admirably adapted to the purpose for which it was brought; and we lost no time or opportunity in using it to support the cause in which we are engaged: and we should perhaps have done so to the present moment, had not the ADVERSARY alluded to above, put a final stop to our reasonings drawn from ANALOGY.—That we have long made use of improper means to support INFANT BAPTISM, we are thoroughly convinced—and we are firmly persuaded, that the only ground on which it can be fairly defended, is the ANCIENT USAGE OF THE CHURCH.—Her countenance and sanction are, in fact, DIVINE LAW—and these ALONE must be the RULE of our conduct, and the STANDARD of obedience.—He that seeks to establish INFANT BAPTISM on any other foundation, detracts from the GLORY of the CHURCH, and is building on the SAND.

After having said thus much, we think our vanity cannot be impeached, if it be presumed that our evidence must have weight in the subject before us. We cannot be suspected of partiality or duplicity, for we are really sorry to see our friends so UNSTABLE—so fond of departing from the good old way, and so desirous of making EXPERIMENTS in religion. Confident

we

we are, that nothing but unanimity and firmness can retain the rite we support. It must be owned we stand in **JEOPARDY** at present; and where must we look for deliverance?—not to contradictory assertions, and inferences drawn from customs which Christianity hath long since abolished. Let us not plead evidence that we never can produce—let us openly assert the **SILENCE** of scripture, and appeal to the wise decisions of the **CHURCH**. We are surrounded by enemies ever on the watch;—we have long occupied posts, that, in the hour of conflict, have been found always untenable; and where should we flee in the moment of danger, but to the **STRONG HOLD** from which we cannot be dislodged? This asylum the church hath provided as a place of rest and of safety; for he must be impiously bold who even dares to scale the walls that she hath erected, and prodigal of life indeed, who against her batteries would hazard an attack.

(Signed)

AMY CAUDLE, SEC.

21st Jan. 1786.



F I N I S.

